

WHATLEY HOMESTEAD  
North Barton Gulch  
West of Blue River  
Vicinity of Breckenridge  
Summit County  
Colorado

HABS No. CO-173

HABS  
COLO  
59-BREC.V,  
1-

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey  
National Park Service  
Rocky Mountain Regional Service  
Department of the Interior  
Denver, Colorado 80225

HABS  
COLO  
59-BREC.V  
1-

## HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

WHATLEY HOMESTEAD  
~~SITE 5ST446~~

HABS No. CO-173  
(Page 1)

### Location:

The Whatley Homestead site (5ST446) is located is North Barton Gulch, approximately one-half mile west of the Blue River in the northeast quarter of the northeast quarter of the northwest quarter of Section 24, Township 6 South, Range 78 West, Summit County, Colorado. This location is about 2.5 miles north-northwest of the town of Breckenridge.

### Significance:

The Whatley Ranch appears to represent the broad pattern, within the Colorado Mountains, of the establishment of seasonal or secondary recreational homes. It dates from a developmental period of this theme (1915-1945), and preserves the character of a non-commercial visitor's ranch.

### Description:

The physical remains at the Whatley Homestead include five buildings, abandoned machinery, hay fields and some irrigation ditches. Building #1, the main house (CO-173-D), was built around 1922 by Barney Whatley and is in an excellent state of preservation, having been lived in and maintained for most of the period since it was built. According to *A Guide to Colorado Architecture* the house would be classified as a large example of Pioneer Log (Pearce 1983). It is English Frame in basic shape with a gabled roof and a gabled wall dormer. An addition with a shed roof is attached to the rear. Construction is of round logs joined with square notches and chinked with cement. It is 1 1/2 stories high with a loft. It is typical of a type of construction associated with more permanent and important ranch headquarters and residences in the Rocky Mountains. However, this type of construction is rare in southern Summit County.

Building #5, the large log barn (CO-173-B), built in 1938, is one and one-half stories with a wood-shingled gambrel roof, and a river cobble and cement foundation. There are 12 courses of logs on the first level with cement chinking and square notching at the corners, 17 courses of logs with no chinking on the second level front and back, and milled lumber on the top portion of the front and back and framing the windows and doors. Three smaller log outbuildings remain, one of which is reported to have been used as a summer milking barn and possibly the first building on the property. These two sheds (CO-173-C and CO-173-E) and a small barn (CO-173-D) are more deteriorated than the main house, but are of similar Pioneer Log construction. The sheds have gabled roofs and walls of round logs with square-notched joints and cement chinking. These sheds have been reroofed with corrugated steel strongbarn. Building #4, the small barn (CO-173-D), also has walls of round logs with square-notched joints, but has only traces of chinking. The log ends also project out from the corner joints more prominently than on the other buildings. The roof is gambrelled and has wooden shake shingles. There is also a stove-pipe chimney at the southeast end of the roof, southwest of the ridgeline.

History:

Patent records show that the 160 acre homestead on which the buildings are located was patented on June 1, 1917. Patents for adjacent 160 parcels were issued to Robert Whatley on June 1, 1916 and to Anna Whatley on June 8, 1917. These individuals were siblings of Barney Whatley. The homestead apparently served more as a seasonal residence and a retreat for the Whatley family than it did as an agricultural homestead. During the life of the homestead, some limited truck gardening was done, strawberries and rhubarb were sold to Breckenridge residents by Barney Whatley, while hay, various vegetables, a few milk cows, hogs and chickens were raised for personal use. The homestead was not a viable high country ranch, however, and was never of importance for agricultural reasons. Irrigation once served about 150 acres of the total 480 acres of patented land. Even though Barney Whatley was an accomplished gardener and enjoyed this lifestyle, it was the earnings from his law practice that supported the family.

Barney Whatley was a well-known figure locally and the homestead was a retreat for some influential politicians, including Hugo Black, Wayne Aspinall, Oscar Chapman, as well as for the Whatley family. It could be more accurately characterized as a recreational site than as a high country ranch. It was never important to the mainstream of economic development in Summit County, but it can be related to the theme of early recreation and tourism as presented in the Colorado Mountains Historic Context (Mehls 1984).

The mining history of Summit County began in 1859 with placer discoveries along the Blue River (Hollister 1867:333) and in one form or another, continued until about 1936 (Gilliand 1980:126). The presence of numerous mining prospect pits within the Whatley survey area indicates that exploration occurred, but no discoveries of importance were ever made in Middle or North Barton Gulches. However, the floor of the nearby Blue River Valley was extensively dredge-mined. By 1917 mining in the high country was generally in decline (Mehls 1984), and other pursuits, including agriculture and a growing tourist industry increased in importance.

The context of recreational use of the mountains dates from prior to the mining boom, when "gentleman hunters" came into the region in small numbers to exploit the rich game resources. In addition to hunting, resorts, mineral springs, and visitor's ranches developed. The greatest period of development of recreational sites in this region was after 1915, with pre-World War II tourism reaching a zenith in the 1920's (Mehls 1984:95). One substantial category of tourists was outdoorsmen who came to hunt, fish, horse-pack and hike in the mountains. It was a trend for financially well-off individuals to buy mountain cabins for their personal use. At one time a bill, sponsored by Colorado Representative Edward T. Taylor (1908-1941), called the Vacation Homestead Act, was debated by Congress. This bill, which never passed, would have allowed small homesteads for vacation cabins. During this period a number of long-term

leases were granted for such cabins by the Forest Service. Few of these vacation cabins remain.

Although probably not the dominant practice, many homesteads patented under one of traditional agricultural homestead acts were probably established for residential or recreational use. The Whatley Homestead may well fit into this category, whether by original intent, or simply because of the marginal nature of its location as an agricultural facility.

Barney Whatley was an attorney who, early in his career was an associate of Hugo Black, who later became Chief Justice of the Supreme Court. He contracted tuberculosis and came west to Colorado for treatment. According to the Muellers, past caretakers of the Whatley property, Barney arrived in Breckenridge in the summer of 1912 from Birmingham, Alabama. According to Anneka Whatley, he answered an advertisement for a town and county attorney for Breckenridge and Summit County. This brought him into the high country where he made contacts with the railroads serving the area, and with people in the mining industry. He became a legal representative of railroad interests, and working for mining interests, assembled the block of claims that later became the Climax Molybdenum Mine which he also represented. He served, at one time, as the District Attorney in Leadville. By about 1920, his growing law practice and the desire to raise a family (two sons Alfred and Bill) led him to settle in Denver with his wife Gertrude, the daughter of a Leadville mining engineer.

It was during his tenure in Summit County, between 1912 and 1920, that Whatley put together the homestead. The entire Whatley family, including Barney's parents and his siblings Robert and Anna, joined Barney in Summit County and participated in the establishment of the homestead. After Barney Whatley moved to Denver, it became his practice to spend summer months at the homestead when the children were out of school and the courts were closed.

Barney Whatley had maintained his contact with Hugo Black who became a regular visitor to the homestead. Other influential people were guests as well. Barney Whatley became active in the Democratic party and once in the 1940s unsuccessfully ran for the US Senate. He spent time in Washington and had important contacts there. His wife, Gertrude, held a mathematics degree from Denver University, was highly intelligent, and was reputed to be skilled at bridge. After 1920 the homestead's most important function was apparently as a retreat and recreational property.

#### Sources:

##### Published Sources

Gilliand, Mary Ellen, *Summit: A Gold Rush History of Summit County, Colorado*. Alpenrose Press, Silverthorne, CO, 1980.

Hollister, Ovando J., *The Mines of Colorado*. Promontory Press, New York, 1867, reprinted 1974.

Mehls, Steven F., *Colorado Mountains Historic Context*. Colorado Historical Society, Denver, 1984.

Pearce, Sarah J., *A Guide to Colorado Architecture*. The State Historical Society of Colorado, Denver, 1983.

Public Records

County deed and patent records, Summit County Courthouse, Breckenridge, Colorado.

Water rights records (including irrigation improvements), Colorado Division of Water Resources, Water Division No. 5, Water District 36 Field Office, Silverthorne, Colorado.

Interviews

Marian and Orin Mueller, former caretakers of the Whatley Ranch property (1950-1986), interviewed by Sally J. Metcalf, 1986. Notes on file Metcalf Archaeological Consultants, Inc., Eagle, Colorado.

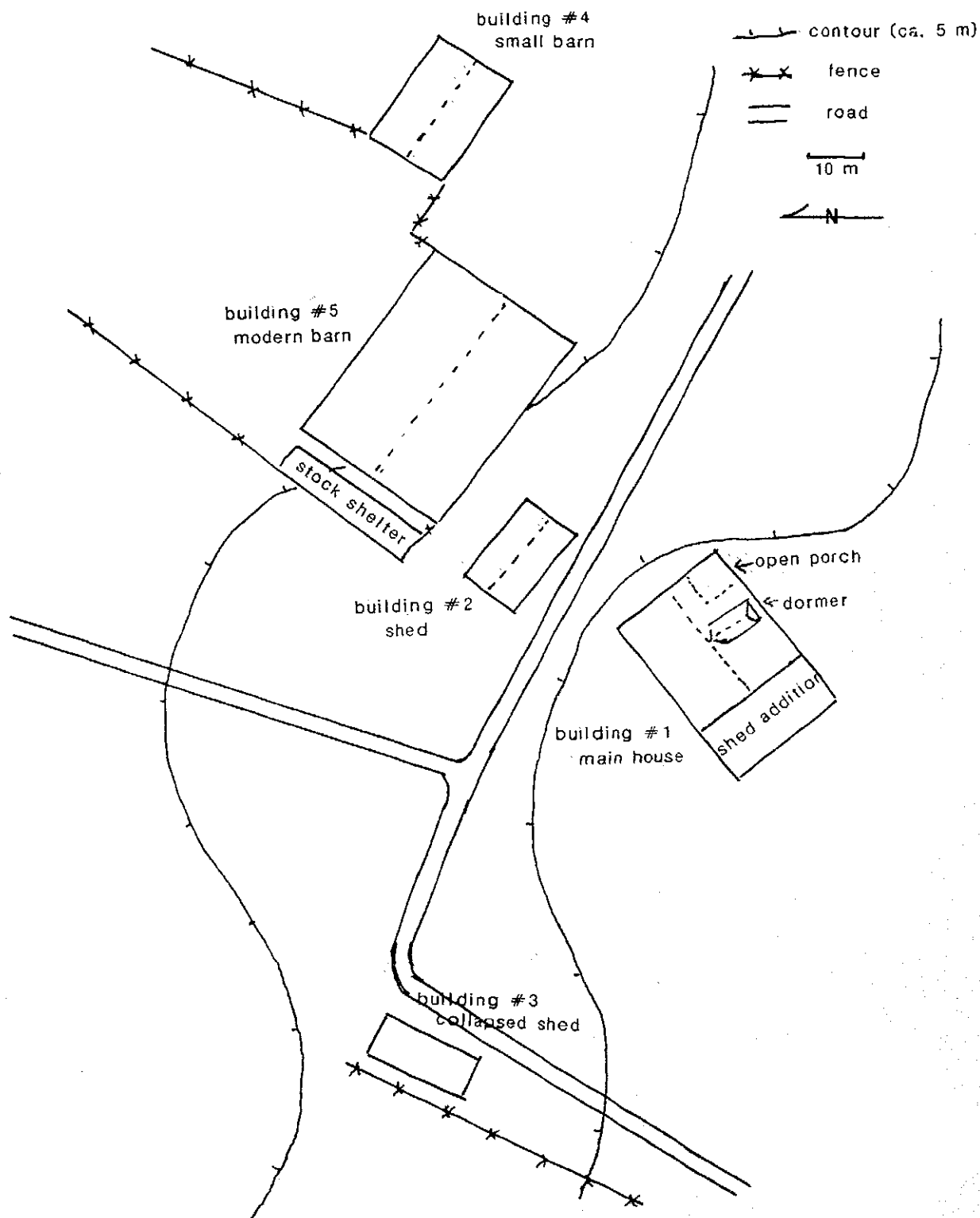
Rebecca Waugh, historian, Summit County Historical Society, Breckenridge, interviewed by Michael D. Metcalf, 1986. Notes on file Metcalf Archaeological Consultants, Inc., Eagle, Colorado.

Anneka Whatley, wife of Alfred Whatley (Barney's son), interviewed by Winthrop Lockwood, 1986. Notes on file Whatley Ranch J.V., Ltd., Breckenridge, Colorado.

Historians:

Sally J. Metcalf and Michael D. Metcalf, Cultural Resources Consultants, Metcalf Archaeological Consultants, Inc., Eagle, Colorado.

WHATLEY HOMESTEAD  
~~SITE 5ST446~~  
 HABS No. CO-173  
 (Page 5)



Sketch map (compass and pace) of Whatley Homestead (5ST446) core complex.